

Attachment 3

SECRET

PHOTOGRAPHIC AND OBSERVATION SATELLITES
(Contingency)

THE PROBLEM:

In an attack on US space activities the Soviets have charged that the US reconnaissance program is aggressive in nature. The Soviet Union has included in its draft statement of general principles for outer space use and exploration the provision that "the use of artificial satellites for the collection of intelligence information in the territory of foreign States is incompatible with the objectives of mankind in its conquest of outer space." We must anticipate that bloc members in the forthcoming UNGA will criticize reconnaissance satellites as illegal and aggressive. Criticism of United States observation satellites may also arise within the context of a neutral or Bloc proposal to define "peaceful uses" or "peaceful purposes."

UNITED STATES POSITION:

The United States holds that proposed declarations or agreements attempting to deny or restrict the use of outer space for photographic, observation, or "reconnaissance" purposes are unacceptable. The peaceful character of observations from space is not altered by their being made by military personnel. For example, the United States considers the observations and photography made by Soviet cosmonauts (as indeed, any other observation activity which the USSR may be conducting) as peaceful, and we consider their military status and the intent of their observations irrelevant. As Deputy Secretary of Defense Gilpatric said on September 5, 1962: "We are developing through activities in space and observations from space our ability to improve our capabilities in fields such as communications, navigation, meteorology, mapping and geodesy....These programs have great significance not only for our military forces but for the economic and scientific advance of the United States and of the whole world." International law imposes no restrictions upon observation from outside the territorial limits of States, and observation of national territories from outer space does not in principle differ from observation from the high seas.

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In the absence of disarmament, for which the United States is diligently working, the use of observation satellites for military purposes may be necessary for national security; observation satellites may even bring disarmament a step closer by providing support for verification of disarmament agreements.

In public statements, the terms "photographic" and "observation" are, when appropriate and feasible, used in place of "reconnaissance."